

We claim:

1. A method of entering a host into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:

receiving a call from a given caller at a VRU;

5 receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;

forwarding the conference code to a proxy server;

sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call;

determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

10 forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least one interface server receiving the request;

determining that the given caller is a conference host;

determining that at least one participant has called in previously to the given caller and has provided a conference code that is at least related to the conference code entered
15 by the given caller;

requesting that a new conference be created that corresponds to the conference code entered by the given caller;

assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers;

generating a unique identifier for the new conference;

20 providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU;

providing a mixer identifier that uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;

loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new conference, and the mixer identifier; and

placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.

25 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining a class of mixer associated with the conference code.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting a class of mixer to host the new conference based on the conference code.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein assigning the new conference includes assigning the new conference to a mixer of a class associated with the conference code.
- 5 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving at least a second call from a second caller seeking entry to the new conference call, wherein the at least second call is received at a further VRU.
6. The method of claim 1, further comprising disconnecting a communication link between a given conferee and the VRU.
- 10 7. The method of claim 6, wherein disconnecting includes the given conferee entering at least one DTMF signal into a handset.
8. The method of claim 6, wherein disconnecting includes the given conferee hanging up a handset.
9. The method of claim 1, further comprising sending a disconnect message to the mixer
- 15 hosting a conference to which a given conferee coupled.
10. The method of claim 9, wherein sending a disconnect message includes referencing at least one parameter that was associated with the given conferee when the given conferee entered the conference.
11. The method of claim 1, further comprising muting of a single, selected conferee.
- 20 12. The method of claim 11, wherein muting includes at least in part referencing at least one parameter representing an order in which a plurality of conferees entered the conference.
13. The method of claim 12, further comprising obtaining the parameter by requesting a roll call of the conferees.
14. The method of claim 12, further comprising obtaining the parameter via web-based
- 25 interface.
15. The method of claim 1, further comprising locking at least one given conference such that no additional conferees may be added to the at least one given conference.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein locking the at least one given conference is performed on a conferencing management system without involving a mixer hosting the at least one given conference.
17. The method of claim 15, wherein locking the at least one given conference is performed
5 on at least one voice response unit receiving requests from the additional conferees, by direct access to a conferencing database.
18. The method of claim 17, wherein locking the at least one given conferee is performed without involving a mixer hosting the at least one given conference.
19. The method of claim 1, further comprising selectively deleting an individual conferee
10 from a given conference.
20. The method of claim 19, wherein deleting the at least one individual conferee includes referring to at least one parameter that is related to an order in which a plurality of conferees entered the given conference.
21. The method of claim 20, further comprising obtaining the parameter via a roll call of
15 conferees.
22. The method of claim 20, further comprising obtaining the parameter via a web-based interface.
23. The method of claim 1, further comprising outdialing from within the conference call to at least one third party.
- 20 24. A method of entering a conference call participant into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:
- receiving a call from a given caller at a VRU;
 - receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;
 - forwarding the conference code to a proxy server;
 - 25 sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call;
 - determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least one interface server receiving the request; determining that the given caller is a conference participant; requesting that a new conference be created that corresponds to the conference code entered by the given caller;

5 assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers;

 generating a unique identifier for the new conference;

 providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU;

 providing a mixer identifier that uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;

10 loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new conference, and the mixer identifier; and

 placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.

25. A method of entering a conference call participant into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:

15 receiving a call from a given caller at a VRU;

 receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;

 forwarding the conference code to a proxy server;

 sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call;

 determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

20 forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least one interface server receiving the request;

 determining that the given caller is a conference participant;

 requesting that the given caller be placed on hold until a conference host associated with the conference code calls in; and

25 when the conference host calls in, performing at least the following:

 assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers;

generating a unique identifier for the new conference;
providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU;
providing a mixer identifier that uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;
loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new
5 conference, and the mixer identifier; and
placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.

26. A method of entering a conference call participant into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:

receiving a call from a given caller at a VRU;
10 receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;
forwarding the conference code to a proxy server;
sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call;
determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing
services;
15 forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which
comprises at least a data store and at least one interface server receiving the request;
determining that the given caller is a conference participant;
requesting that the given caller be connected with at least a further caller temporarily
until a conference host associated with the conference code calls in; and

20 when the conference host calls in, performing at least the following:

assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers;
generating a unique identifier for the new conference;
providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU;
providing a mixer identifier that uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;
25 loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new
conference, and the mixer identifier; and

placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.

27. A method of entering a host into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:

receiving a call from a given caller at a VRU;

5 receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;

forwarding the conference code to a proxy server;

sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call;

determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

10 forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least one interface server, wherein the interface server receives the request;

determining that an existing conference is at least related to the conference code entered by the given caller;

15 determining that the given caller is a conference host;

obtaining from the data store at least the unique identifier for the existing new conference and the mixer identifier related to the mixer hosting the existing conference; and

placing the VRU to which the given caller is connected and the mixer hosting the existing conference in audio communication.

20 28. A method of entering a host into a new conference call;

receiving a call from a caller at a VRU;

receiving at least a conference code from the caller at the VRU;

forwarding the conference code to a proxy server;

sending a request to the proxy server to enter the caller into a conference call;

25 determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least one interface server, wherein the interface server receives the request;

5 determining that no existing conference corresponds to the conference code entered by the caller;

determining that the caller is a conference host;

requesting that a new conference be created that corresponds to the conference code entered by the caller;

assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers;

10 generating a unique identifier for the new conference;

providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU;

providing a mixer identifier that uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;

loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new conference, and the mixer identifier; and

15 placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.